

FINANCE OFFICERS PARTNERSHIP (FOP)

Introduction

The FOP is a professional accounting organization made up of Departmental Financial Officials and Bureau Finance Officers. The primary purpose of the FOP is to provide: (1) a means of managing and rapidly implementing the financial recommendations of the NPR and the Department's CFO Council; and (2) a structure through which Finance Officers develop agreements, consensus, and priorities on improvements in systems, operations, services, and information. The goal of the FOP is to coordinate, cooperate, and participate in the short and long term improvement of the Department's Financial Management Program while promoting efficiencies that reduce costs and improve service. (Refer to Appendix A for the FOP roster.)

Mission

The FOP's mission is to:

- Provide leadership in developing financial management strategic direction,
- Plan, implement and manage financial management initiatives,
- Ensure linkages across administrative support functions,
- Advance sound financial policies and practices,
- Champion the establishment of a partnership relationship with program managers,
- Encourage collaborative efforts across the DOI financial community,
- Promote consensus within the DOI finance arena and establish priorities,
- Foster information sharing within the Department of the Interior both to and from the CFO Council and PFM,
- Provide a structure for communicating the accomplishments of the DOI financial management community, and
- Establish operating structures to address data stewardship, management of systems and other initiatives.

The FOP recognizes that financial management encompasses the full range of administrative disciplines: Accounting, Budget, Acquisition, Property, and Information Resources Technology. To effectively accomplish its goal, the Partnership will reach out to these disciplines to form expanded Partnership teams to address the overall complex financial management challenges.

The recommendations of the FOP will be made through the Director of PFM to the CFO Council. The FOP organization consists of one representative from PFM (the Deputy Chief Financial Officer's representative) and one representative from each bureau (Finance Officer). Meetings are held on a regular basis.

The FOP uses Project Action Teams (PATs) to address/carry out its initiatives, activities, etc. The FOP

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selects PAT leaders and staffs them from the bureaus, Administrative Service Centers (ASCs) and PFM. In general, the PATs manage the projects (action items) and are accountable to the FOP through their representatives for the completion of assignments.

The FOP is a fully participatory organization consisting of one representative from PFM (the Deputy Chief Financial Officer's representative) and one representative from each bureau (the Finance Officer). The FFS-SAB operates under its charter but will report to the FOP. The SACAT also functions under the FOP. The work of the SAB and SACAT cover both the FFS and ABACIS bureaus. The FOP selects the Project Action Team (PAT) Leaders (usually volunteers). The PAT Leaders select their team members from the bureau nominations. The Finance Officers to whom the PAT Leaders report are the accountable managers for their respective Project Action Items. The FOP periodically reviews the progress of each PAT.

Administration

The recommendations of the FOP are made through the Director of PFM to the Interior CFO Council. Meetings are held on a regular basis. The Chairperson is responsible for the direction and administration of the FOP as follows:

- Develop and maintain a Management Action Plan (MAP) for the activities of the PATs.
- Coordinate and facilitate the exchange of management information necessary for the FOP to track each project.
- Facilitate and influence the activities of the PATs and any special teams, in cooperation with the Accountable Finance Officer, the SAB, and the SACAT.
- Prepare and distribute periodic reports or summaries of activities.
- Represent the FOP at CFO Council meetings.
- Assist in obtaining the resources necessary to carry out PAT team objectives.
- Schedule meetings, develop and distribute agendas, conduct meetings, prepare meeting minutes as appropriate and distribute to each FOP representative.
- Solicit comments and recommendations from FOP representatives.
- Present reports and recommendations made by the FOP to the CFO Council through the Office of Financial Management (PFM).

Selection of High Priority Projects

The FOP reviews recommendations presented by the CFO council, PFM, or the bureaus. The FOP prioritizes the projects and recommends project initiative teams to PFM. Upon approval of a project, a Project Action Team prepares a Project Scope Statement which defines the project objectives, target completion dates, dependencies and assumptions, and major milestones.

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Formation of Project Action Teams (PATs)

Members of the FOP volunteer to manage one or more of the high priority recommendations. In each of these cases, a member of the responsible Finance Officer's staff is assigned the responsibility to lead the PAT. The FOP also assigns some of the recommendations to the SAB and SACAT.

Members of the FOP nominate key staff to participate on the various PATs. The Team Leaders are provided with information regarding each nominee's relevant skills and experience and are empowered to select the members of their PAT.

Project Management

The hierarchy for project management is illustrated below:

- CFO Council
- Director of Fiscal Resources/Office of Financial Management
- Chair, Finance Officers Partnership
- Finance Officers Partnership Representatives
- Project Action Team Leaders
- Project Action Team Members

The accountable manager for a PAT is the FOP representative to whom the PAT Leader reports. Ultimately, the Chair is responsible for reporting the progress and accomplishments of each of the PATs to the CFO Council through the Office of Financial Management. The accountable FOP representative is responsible for ensuring that the Team Leader who reports to him/her has adequate resources to successfully complete the project on time and that identified resource problems are immediately reported to the FOP for resolution. Revised dates for deliverables must also be reported immediately with an assessment regarding the impact of such revisions on the project end date.

Administrative Service Centers' Participation

The Washington and Denver ASCs also develop Management Action Plans as appropriate.

Special Initiatives

The FOP has undertaken two special initiatives with Department-wide implications. These initiatives are described below.

Open FFS Review

The purpose of this effort is to determine the status of the AMS design and development of Open FFS, review the features/functionality of the software, and understand the FFS technical basis for Interior

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planning purposes. The review team includes individuals from the SAB, the WASC, DASC, and bureau operations and program staff. The review will involve briefings by AMS, product demonstrations, testing of Program Office Desktop (POD), and system configuration meetings. In July, the Department, working with AMS, conducted a two day workshop to determine the criteria for reviewing the software based on currently identified improvements needed in the Interior financial management systems. An initial review of the POD software is scheduled in September and other sessions will be scheduled as other software modules are available. The majority of the work will be conducted during FY 1997.

Benchmark Study

Currently, the Department is participating in a benchmarking process sponsored by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). This effort is needed to update the best practices study conducted in 1993, and to assist the Department in focusing on areas where the greatest potential for improvement exists.

The process sponsored by the AICPA uses the Hackett Group, an Ohio corporation that specializes in business re-engineering, to provide technical expertise and a database application with detailed process definitions that have been developed specifically for this study. The Hackett Group Benchmark program is the largest, most comprehensive finance study of its kind, with more than 650 companies and corporations participating worldwide. The software has been distributed to bureau project coordinators who will coordinate their bureaus responses to the benchmark questions. The study is expected to be completed in the Fall 1996.

Project Action Teams (PATs)

The FOP's original Management Action Plan addressed 15 PATs for immediate action. A brief discussion of each of these PATs (numbered PAT #1 - PAT #15) is provided below. In addition, since the publication of the original MAP, seven new PATs have been added. A brief discussion of each of these new PATs (numbered PAT #16 - PAT #22) is provided below.

PAT #1: Rocky Mountain Bankcard System (RMBCS) Interface

Project Objective: Develop, test, and implement a standard payment interface in the Department's FFS applications for VISA credit card transactions from RMBCS.

Status: Software development completed in FY 1996. Software to be installed in threebureaus in FY 1996, with remaining bureaus to implement in FY 1997.

PAT #2: IDEAS/FFS/ABACIS/Property Systems Interface and Electronic Commerce

Project Objective: Determine the most cost-effective means of interfacing/integrating data between the IDEAS and the accounting and property systems, and analyze the effects of Electronic Commerce (EC) initiatives on these systems.

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Status: Scheduled for completion in FY 1997.

PAT #3: Automated Travel Management Software

Project Objective: Implement a travel management software package for use by all DOI bureaus that will meet bureau, Departmental, and regulatory requirements.

Status: Project objective redirected to the DOI Travel Re-engineering Lab initiatives (see PATs #18 and #22 which are briefly discussed later in this Appendix).

PAT #4: Automated Teller Machine Usage for Travel Advances

Project Objective: Implement a cost effective, Department-wide Automated Teller Machine (ATM) travel advance program by expanding the American Express ATM usage for obtaining travel advances.

Status: Completed.

PAT #5: American Express Credit Card Interface

Project Objective: Develop an automated FFS interface for airline ticket costs processed by American Express.

Status: Completed. Interface strategy that was developed was not feasible. Subject to be revisited in FY 1997, once certain of the DOI Travel Re-engineering Lab initiatives have been implemented.

PAT #6: Standard Payment and Certification Processes

Project Objective: Develop streamlined, standard, and cost-effective payment and certification processes for small purchases, contract purchases, and employee travel reimbursements.

Status: Scheduled for completion in FY 1997.

PAT #7: Statistical Sampling

Project Objective: Develop a training package and provide training for all bureaus on proper statistical sampling concepts and procedures for use in auditing financial records.

Status: Completed.

PAT #8: Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Travel Consolidation

Project Objective: Determine the viability of standardizing, re-engineering, streamlining, and

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consolidating the PCS functions with the objective of reducing FTEs and improving customer service.

Status: An information request was distributed to bureau finance officers soliciting interest in the consolidation of change of station voucher processing. Information concerning costs, turn around expectations, and any ancillary functions to be provided (such as employee handbooks, phone/site counselling, etc.) was requested. The due date for responses is September 13, 1996. Project completion is scheduled for FY 1997.

PAT #9: Remote Data Entry

Project Objective: Document the current remote data entry (RDE) practices throughout the Department, determine which documents are candidates for RDE, and develop standard RDE packages for use by the bureaus.

Status: Completed.

PAT #10: Joint Testing of FFS Software Releases/Standardization of FFS System Processing Controls and Options

Project Objective: Standardize systems settings and options across bureau lines; develop standard test plans, schedules, and test cases; and conduct common tests to help eliminate duplicate bureau testing.

Status: Completed.

PAT #11: Quality of American Management Systems (AMS) Software Releases/ Software Enhancement Procedures

Project Objective: Improve the quality of the software delivered by AMS, and improve software enhancement procedures by identifying and documenting standard procedures and processes for submitting requests for enhancements and/or problem reports to the SAB for review and approval.

Status: Completed.

PAT #12: Employee Debt Collection Processes

Project Objective: Re-engineer and improve the overall effectiveness of the employee debt collection process.

Status: Scheduled for completion in FY 1997.

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PAT #13: Feasibility of Consolidating and Standardizing Non-Program (Non-Employee) Delinquent Debt Management

Project Objective: Determine the feasibility of consolidating the management of specific types of delinquent debt within Interior.

Status: Completed. Project objective was preempted by the Department of the Treasury's consolidated debt processing services initiative. Two Interior bureaus, including the bureau with the most non-program debt in Interior, are completing memorandums of understanding with Treasury to provide debt collection services.

PAT #14: Processes for Adjustments/Redistributions and Reconciliations

Project Objective: Examine the reasons for adjustments/redistributions and reconciliations, and identify processes that may be automated.

Status: Completed.

PAT #15: FFS Table Clearing/Archival Process

Project Objective: Develop and implement an automated table clearing process in FFS, and research data archival and retrieval technology for implementation in the Department.

Status: Scheduled for completion in FY 1997.

PAT #16: Labor Cost Interface

Project Objective: Develop specifications, program, test, and implement a FPPS standardized labor cost interface in all bureaus utilizing FFS.

Status: Scheduled for completion in FY 1997.

PAT #17: Vision:Flashpoint

Project Objective: Promote the use of Vision:Flashpoint as a tool to modernize the current mainframe version of FFS.

Status: Initial implementation efforts are underway in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Additional bureaus to implement in FY 1997.

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PAT #18: Travel System

Project Objective: Participate in the travel system improvement efforts identified by the DOI Travel Re-engineering Lab.

Status: New PAT. Project Scope Statement being prepared.

PAT #19: Electronic Invoices

Project Objective: Investigate the feasibility of expanding electronic invoicing capabilities with selected vendors, and develop any appropriate accounting system interface processes.

Status: New PAT. Project Scope Statement being prepared.

PAT #20: Rocky Mountain Bankcard--Daily Pay

Project Objective: Modify the RMBCS interface to accept and process daily invoices.

Status: New PAT. Project Scope Statement being prepared.

PAT #21: Financial Management Performance Indicators

Project Objective: Develop a common set of performance indicators to evaluate relevant outputs, service levels, and outcomes of financial management functions in Interior bureaus.

Status: New PAT. Project Scope Statement being prepared.

PAT #22: Travel Lab Recommendations

Project Objective: Participate in the implementation of the travel process changes identified by the DOI Travel Re-engineering Lab.

Status: New PAT. Project Scope Statement being prepared.